

party send up a raucous cheer when the chief executive enters the chamber. Even people who despise the president jostle to be captured on camera smiling, clapping and cheering for him.

Throughout the address, the president's supporters bounce up and down giving standing ovations in response to choreographed rhetorical flourishes. His opponents, also playing to the cameras, signify displeasure with stony silence. Or they disproportionately applaud such presidential lines as "We must do better," when "better" refers to a policy that the opponents support.

The president tosses rhetorical bouquets to people seated in the House gallery—his family, disabled veterans, civilian heroes.

The State of the Union address has become a long, shallow and predictable bit of political theater. A reversion to Jeffersonian discretion, considering the current circumstances, wouldn't be a bad thing.

COMMENTS ON 1ST SWEARING IN— THE 106TH CONGRESS

HON. JOHN E. SWEENEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, my newly confirmed colleagues of the 106th Congress. I am truly honored to be here today joining this distinguished group of Americans from across our great nation. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the U.S. Capitol today with these Members of the 106th Congress is an honor exceeded only by that of representing the wonderful people of the 22nd District of New York.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly humbled by the awesome responsibility and I am invigorated by the challenge before me—to carry on the tradition of my esteemed predecessor, Jerry Solomon, and to advance policies beneficial to the 600,000 people I now represent.

Today is a day dominated by idealistic visions and profound rhetoric. While I bring with me today the ideals of freedom and opportunity, I am riveted in the reality that these notions must be translated into concrete results in people's everyday life. Bringing tax relief to hard working families, promoting economic development to create new job opportunities, taking significant steps to ensure a safe and drug-free environment in our schools—All these examples make a difference in the homes of the people of the Hudson Valley and Adirondack Mountains of New York and all will be my priorities as I take the oath of office today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my family, those that are here today and those that could not make the trip, for all their love and support as we begin this new endeavor. I would like to thank Congressman Solomon a truly great American, for his two decades of dedicated and tireless service to the citizens of the 22nd District of New York. And thank you to those same citizens that have entrusted me to advance their views here in the U.S. Capitol.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCRIBED BURNS IN AREA NATIONAL FOR- ESTS

HON. JAMES E. ROGAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, recent figures from the Department of the Interior indicate that the cost of fighting severe wildfires has risen from \$100 million per year just two decades ago, to well over \$1 billion today. In addition, wildfires every year destroy hundreds of acres of forest lands, threatening lives, home and air quality.

In many remote regions of the country, forestry officials use small, controlled fires known as "prescribed burns" to remove excess underbrush that fuels severe wildfires. In so doing, they eliminate a major source of fuel of wildfires, while also promoting healthier forest growth.

In metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, however, officials are prevented from expanding this procedure due to air quality regulations that limit emissions from all sources—wildfires, burns, smog, and the like. Last year alone, these officials wanted to burn more than 20,000 acres to protect local residents from out-of-control wildfires. Bureaucratic regulations, however, permitted the burning of only 2,000 acres—well below safety expert's recommendations.

Working with Representatives DREIER, MCKEON and local forestry and air quality officials, I have introduced the Forest Protection Act. This measure will ease current restrictions for ten years to allow officials to conduct an expanded prescribed burn program. Over the time-year period, local officials will monitor forest health and air quality to ensure that both improve over time.

Local forestry officials are not the only experts to recognize the importance of this procedure. Both Interior Secretary Babbitt and Environmental Protection Agency chief Carol Browner have publicly supported prescribed burns as a means to promote forest health and prevent severe wildfires.

The Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act will give forestry officials the ability to use this time-tested technique to protect area residents and air quality while supporting the delicate ecological balance in our forests.

NOTCH BABY ACT OF 1999

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Notch Baby Act of 1999 which would create a new alternative transition computation formula for Social Security benefits for those seniors born between 1917 and 1921. These seniors, who are generally referred to as "Notch Babies," have been receiving lower monthly Social Security benefits than seniors born in the years just prior to or after this five year period.

There are those who dispute the existence of a Notch problem. However, take into consideration the following example presented in

a 1994 report by the Commission on Social Security Notch Issue. There are two workers who retired at the same age with the same average career earnings. One was born on December 31, 1916 and the other was born on January 2, 1917. Both retired in 1982 at the age of 65. The retiree born in 1917 receives \$110 a month less in Social Security benefits than did the retiree born just two days before in 1996. Also take into consideration that there are currently more than 6 million seniors in our Nation who are faced with this painfully obvious inequity in the Social Security benefit computation formula.

By phasing in an improved benefit formula over five years, the Notch Baby Act of 1999 will restore fairness and equality in the Social Security benefit computation formula for the Notch Babies. For once and for all this legislation would put to rest the Notch issue, and it would put an end to the constant barrage of mailings and fundraising attempts which target our Nation's seniors in the name of Notch reform. Our seniors deserve fairness and equality in the Social Security system. They deserve an end to the repeated congressional stalling on this issue. I urge my colleagues in the House to discuss this issue with the seniors in their districts, and to join me in ensuring that the Notch issue is addressed in the 106th Congress.

INTRODUCING H.R. 218, THE COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT

HON. RANDY "DUKE" CUNNINGHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing my legislation to permit qualified current and former law enforcement officers to carry a concealed firearm in any jurisdiction. This measure is called the Community Protection Act, and I have requested that it be assigned the same bill number as in previous Congresses—H.R. 218.

The Community Protection Act provides three benefits to our police and to our country.

First, it effectively provides thousands more trained cops on the beat—at zero taxpayer cost.

Second, it enables current and former law enforcement officers to protect themselves and their families from criminals. When a criminal completes his or her sentence, that criminal can find where their arresting officer lives, where their corrections officer travels, and other information about our brave law enforcement personnel and their families.

And, third, it helps keep our communities safer from criminals.

This measure is very similar to the H.R. 218 reported by the Judiciary Committee in the 105th Congress, with one exception: this version for the 106th Congress does not address the matter of interstate reciprocity for holders of civilian concealed carry licenses. This measure affects police only.

In the interest of providing Members and the public additional background information on the Community Protection Act, I have attached below some excerpts from the Committee report accompanying H.R. 218 from the 105th Congress (H. Rept. 105-819), and my testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, the details of which remain applicable to the legislation I introduce today: